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THE USE OF COOPERATIVE INTEGRATED READING AND COMPOSITION (CIRC) METHOD TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

Sigit Prajogo, M.Pd.

SMA Negeri 2 Blitar

Jl. Ciliwung 396 Blitar

E-mail: siprayogo@gmail.com**ABSTRAK**

Secara umum, sebagian besar siswa SMA mengalami kesulitan dalam memahami teks. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui penggunaan metode Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah 32 siswa kelas XI IPS 1 SMA 2 Blitar. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian tindakan kelas yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus. Data penelitian ini dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan tes dengan kriteria ketuntasan minimal (KKM) sebesar 76. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa berhasil mencapai KKM. Hal ini ditunjukkan dari peningkatan nilai rata-rata siswa dari 74.38 pada siklus 1 menjadi 81.41 pada siklus 2. Aktivitas siswa di kelas juga lebih menyenangkan berkat penerapan metode CIRC. Kesimpulannya, metode CIRC bermanfaat untuk meningkatkan pemahaman membaca siswa, dan meningkatkan proses pembelajaran membaca.

Kata Kunci: *membaca, pemahaman, metode CIRC*

ABSTRACT

In general, most of the students of senior high school have difficulties in comprehending texts. The objective of this research was to investigate the use of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method to improve students' reading comprehension. The participants of this research were 32 students of grade XI of Social Science (XI IPS 1) of SMA 2 Blitar. This research was a classroom action research which was done in two cycles. The data of this research were collected by conducting observation, interview, documentation, and test with the criteria of minimum mastery (KKM) of 76. The result showed that the students successfully met the criteria of minimum mastery. It was indicated from the improvement of the students' mean score from 74.38 in Cycle 1 to 81.41 in Cycle 2. It was also found that the students' activity was delightful in the class thanks to the method. In conclusion, CIRC method was found beneficial to improve the students' reading comprehension, and enhance the learning process of reading.

Keywords: reading, comprehension, CIRC method

INTRODUCTION

Reading has a very strategic position in the teaching and learning English at Senior High School. It is also one of the major English skills that were tested in the National Final Exam for years (Direktorat Jenderal Manajemen Pendidikan, 2006). Due to the importance of reading, students must have adequate reading ability either to accomplish English lessons or to pass English tests. The latter requires the students to benefit their reading ability in performing daily tests, midterm or semester tests, and even the final examinations. In this respect, if students can comprehend the given texts in a test, they will be able to answer the questions related to the texts and finally pass the test.

Reading is an active process that brings the readers to achieve comprehension. Comprehension itself is the heart and goal of reading since the main purpose of reading is to gather meaning from texts. There are some specific purposes of reading. Someone may read in order to get information or knowledge, or in order to know the writer's ideas or writing style. Alternatively, someone may also read for pure recreation and enjoyment, or he/se may read for study. In short, whatever the purpose of reading, someone has to be able to comprehend the text after reading it to reach the purpose of reading itself.

In many cases, however, students are unable to comprehend texts. This happened in the setting of this study. The participating students possessed low reading ability. The interview with the students revealed that they often

failed in reading tests because they faced difficulties in comprehending texts. As a result, they were unable to answer questions about finding main ideas, making outlines, and making summary of the presented texts. There are also other common problems in reading comprehension faced by the students, namely decoding what they read, making connections between what they read and what they already know (background knowledge), and understanding the whole contents of the text such as topic, title, main idea, referring, synonym, antonym, and meaning. Other problems affecting comprehension include chronological sequence, previewing or predicting, explicit or implicit information (detailed and undetailed information), and many others which are caused by limited intelligence, undesirable physical factors, method of teaching, insufficient background for reading, lack of appropriate teacher guidance, lack of interest, unsuitable materials, difficult concepts, and limited vocabulary.

To improve the students' reading comprehension, teachers can select and use a range of reading activities. In this context, teachers are responsible in helping the students to read in order to comprehend or understand what they read. Teachers also have to understand and help the students solve the problems in comprehending texts. These must be done to reach the purpose of reading; that is, comprehension. Moreover, to enhance comprehension, teachers should perform effective strategies. They should realize their roles in teaching the students. They can use appropriate strategy, method, and media which are useful, innovative, interesting, and motivating. This can make the students active in the class, for example in answering questions, discussing, and sharing knowledge. This way, the students will enjoy reading lesson. Teachers are no longer a feared or authoritarian figure, yet they should become a facilitator to assist the students in acquiring knowledge and information they need. Furthermore, the teaching and learning process should be student-centered in which the students are given the opportunity to take part more actively during teaching and learning activities.

In this present study, the results of interview, reading test, and classroom observation revealed several causes of the students' low reading comprehension. First, based on the observation, the English teacher did not use appropriate method, therefore it impacted the students and the class condition during teaching and learning process. Second, the students had low motivation in reading lesson. Third, based on the interview and test, the students' ability in reading was found low.

One of the suggested methods to teach reading is Comparative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) method. As the name suggests, CIRC is an integrated method which includes reading and writing activities. This method emphasizes on the group work either in pairs or small groups to practice reading and comprehending texts. It has three vital elements:

text/story-related activities, direct instruction in reading comprehension, and integrated language arts/writing (Slavin, 1991; Institute of Education Sciences, 2012). Studies have provided evidence that CIRC method is instrumental in promoting comprehension. Some experimental studies revealed that the implementation of CIRC method significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension (Darmayanti, 2014; Mariana, Sutisna, & Wahyuni, 2020; Budiarti, Sa'ud, & Cahyani, 2020; Maruf & Anjely, 2020).

Considering the potential of CIRC method, the researcher applied this method to overcome the above-mentioned problems. It is believed that a series of integrated activities in CIRC method could enhance reading comprehension as well as boost the students' motivation to participate in reading lesson.

METHOD

The design of this research was Classroom Action Research (CAR). Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1983) stated that action research is trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement and as a means of increasing knowledge about curriculum, teaching, and learning. In addition, McNiff (1988) explained that action research is seen as a way of characterizing a loose set of activities that are designed to improve the quality of education.

The participants of this research were the eleventh grade students of Social Science at SMA Negeri 2 Blitar in the 2017/2018 academic year. CAR was applied because these students encountered difficulties in achieving the criteria of minimum mastery of reading skill, particularly in generating main ideas or finding the topic of reading texts. In addition, they had low motivation in taking part in reading class. Thus, CAR was aimed to improve the students' reading comprehension, as well as to enhance their motivation.

A fellow collaborator/teacher helped the researcher in doing this research. The researcher collaborated with the teacher in planning the action, implementing the action, observing the action, and reflecting the action. To be more specific, the researcher acted as a teacher practitioner who implemented the planning while the collaborator/teacher observed both the researcher's performance and the students' progress during the process of learning. This was possible since the researcher was assumed to have better mastery of the method, and the teacher wanted to learn it by doing observation. The observation emphasized how the researcher taught reading through CIRC method, and the students' response and progress on the implementation of the method.

This research consisted of a series of steps. First, the researcher conducted preliminary study to identify the problems. Second, once the problems were located, the researcher determined the purpose of this research. Third, the researcher made a general plan by designing the whole

lesson plan. Fourth, the researcher with the collaborator implemented the lesson. During the lesson, we observed classroom activities, interaction in the classroom, and the students' responses. Fifth, the researcher and the collaborator made a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the learning process. From this step, we discussed whether the plan had to be revised considering some weaknesses that appeared during the Cycle 1, and it resulted in a decision to revise the plan and conduct the Cycle 2. This research had two cycles in total.

The data in this research were collected by several techniques. First, the researcher observed the learning process in preliminary study, and during this research. In doing the observation, the researcher and collaborator made use of observation guide and checklist. Second, the researcher interviewed the students and English teacher to obtain information about the problems that both the teacher and the students encountered in reading lesson. The kind of interview was unstructured interview. The researcher only prepared the questions in general and asked to the participants to answer based on their opinion. The interview was recorded by using audio recording and then the responses were transcribed into written form. Third, the researcher collected a number of documents in the form of the teacher's note, syllabus guidelines, lesson plan, and textbook. It also included photograph or pictures when teaching and learning process occurred. The last technique was testing. The researcher conducted pretest at the beginning of the study, and posttest at the end of each cycle. The scores obtained from pretest and posttests were compared to identify the improvement of students' reading comprehension.

The collected data were analyzed differently based on the type of data. The qualitative data such as field notes, interview transcripts, and documents were analyzed by applying three steps, namely reducing data, displaying data, and drawing conclusion/verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In reducing the data, the researcher only wrote the necessary information from pre-research until the end of the research. The reduced data were then displayed descriptively with the help of table and figure to clarify the information. In the final step, the researcher interpreted the finding and drew conclusion. The quantitative data, on the other hand, were analyzed numerically by using descriptive statistics. It was done by comparing the mean of pretest with the mean of posttest. From this comparison, it can be seen the improvement on the students' reading comprehension score.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in two cycles. The topic of the first and second cycle was narrative text. To obtain the students' improvement in reading comprehension, some reading tests were conducted, namely pretest

at the beginning of the study, and posttest at the end of each cycle. Table 1 shows the comparison of reading score in pretest and posttests.

Table 1: The Comparison of Pretest and Posttests Scores

	Pretest	Posttest of Cycle 1	Posttest of Cycle 2
Sum	2281	2380	2605
Mean	71.28	74.38	81.41

As Table 1 shows, the students' mean score improved in each test. In pretest, the mean was 71.28, which was still under the criteria of minimum mastery. At the end of Cycle 1, the mean progressed to 74.38. Although there was an improvement, the mean of Cycle 1 had yet to reach the criteria. Thus, Cycle 2 was implemented. In the posttest of Cycle 2, the students obtained the good score; the mean increased to 81.41, indicating that the students eventually reached the criteria of minimum mastery.

The mean above reflects positive results regarding the improvement of students' ability in reading comprehension. By analyzing test results, it was found that the students were able to (a) discover the title or topic of texts; (b) generate main ideas; (c) find synonym or antonym of words; (d) guess the meaning from context; (e) locate the correct reference within texts; and (f) find the explicit and implicit information from texts. From these convincing results, it is evident that the implementation of CIRC method can improve the students' reading comprehension.

In addition to the students' ability, the use of CIRC method also brought about positive changes in learning process both in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. First, the students looked motivated and interested in learning. Second, the students practiced social skills such as cooperation, teamwork, and communication skill. Third, the students were active in the classroom. Fourth, the students motivated each other in the group. Fifth, the students had more courage and were confident in presenting their work. Sixth, the teaching and learning process became student-centered. Seventh, the students learned how to solve problem together in the group. Eighth, the class condition were enjoyable, attractive, and interesting. Ninth, the students were easier in comprehending texts thanks to group work activity.

Although CIRC method was substantial to improve reading comprehension and augment the teaching and learning process, there were still some weaknesses of this method. Firstly, half of the students in groups sometimes had disagreement about their work. Some group members even refused to cooperate with other members; it was a waste of time. Secondly, the students were less active in participating in group discussion. The active students often dominated the discussion and controlled the group. At the same

time, the passive students preferred to keep silent and easily got bored with the situation. Simply put, not everyone in a group had an equal voice. The students also sometimes did not trust the others' abilities which resulted in tension or rejection to cooperate. Thirdly, some students sometimes focused on their own activities. They did not pay attention during the discussion. Lastly, some members of groups were still afraid to present their work in front of the class. Despite these weaknesses, CIRC method is still worth implementing thanks to its meaningful learning practices.

The key point which is worth discussing from the findings above is that the students' reading comprehension significantly improved after going through all the learning steps in CIRC method. This finding thus confirms the recent studies which highlighted the positive effect of CIRC method on reading comprehension (Darmayanti, 2014; Mariana et al., 2020; Budiarti et al., 2020). This study is also comparable to a study by Steven, Slavin, & Farnish (1991), the pioneers of CIRC method. Following the principle of CIRC method, the students in this study worked in groups to accomplish a series of reading tasks. More specifically, the students learned how to comprehend texts by discovering topics, generating main ideas, finding synonym or antonym of words, guessing meaning from context, locating reference within texts, and finding the explicit and implicit information from texts. These activities resulted in the improvement of reading comprehension. This finding thus confirms Steven et al. (1991) settling that CIRC method was found to have potentially positive effects on reading comprehension (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study focused on improving the students' reading comprehension through CIRC method. The findings indicate that there is a significant improvement on the students' reading comprehension. This improvement is the result of a series of reading activities namely discovering topics, generating main ideas, finding synonym or antonym of words, guessing meaning from context, locating reference within texts, and finding the explicit and implicit information from texts. These activities, which were performed in groups, also contribute to the transformation of learning process to become student-centered, and improvement of learning motivation. Although this study yielded positive results, the effectiveness of CIRC method on reading comprehension should be further confirmed by involving different participants such as university students, junior high school students, and elementary school students. In addition, future researchers can design new learning activities to develop CIRC method.

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